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### "Why hast thou forsaken me?" The effect of thinking about being ostracized by God on well-being and prosocial behavior

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# “Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?”: The Effect of Thinking About Being Ostracized by God on Well-Being and Prosocial Behavior

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## Abstract

Religion and how people evaluate their relation with God are important for many people. The authors therefore hypothesized that people who espoused a high belief in God would respond negatively when primed with Bible passages that suggested exclusion rather than inclusion. Across two studies, the authors predicted and found that the prospect of being excluded by God decreased well-being and prosocial behavior, especially for individuals intrinsically involved in their faith. Finally, this difference in prosocial behavior was mediated by control and not by other indices of well-being.

## Keywords

ostracism, well-being, helping, prosocial behavior, religion, social exclusion

Many individuals see their religious faith as part and parcel of the larger picture of living their lives (for reviews, see Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). It may thus not be surprising that religious faith has a significant impact on how people feel. For example, a recent large-scale study of almost 1,000 people in Australia found that belief in God, attending church, and praying correlated positively with well-being (Francis & Kaldor, 2002). Jones (1993) further states that religious beliefs is one of the best predictors of life satisfaction.

Religion's impact on behavior and specifically prosocial behavior is more nuanced (Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008). Research has shown that most religious individuals state that they would help others in need (Batson & Gray, 1981; Langford & Langford, 1974; Zook, Koshmider, Kauffman, & Zehr, 1982). However, more controlled experiments that do not rely on self-reports provide mixed results regarding religion's impact on prosocial behavior. Some experimental studies have provided evidence that religion increases prosocial behavior (Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007; Sosis & Ruffle, 2004; Yinon & Sharon, 1985), whereas others suggest religious beliefs fail to increase prosocial behavior or that such increases are not inspired by a true concern for others (Batson et al., 1989; Darley & Batson, 1973). In fact, a recent study even demonstrated that religion may decrease prosocial behavior: Reading a violent passage from the Bible increased the number of loud sound blasts delivered to an ostensible partner, especially when participants believed in God (Bushman, Rigde, Das, Key, & Busath, 2007).

Inconsistent findings may also be attributable to the particular aspects of one's faith that become activated prior to the behavior. Selective attention to or recall of specific Bible verses may well activate different responses. Using insights from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and specifically the research on belonging, social exclusion, and ostracism (for reviews, see Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009; MacDonald & Leary, 2005; Williams, 2007, 2009), we reasoned that religious individuals should care deeply about information that questions the possibility that God will always be there for them. Because God is an important attachment figure in monistic religions (Birgregard & Granqvist, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Sim, Bernice, & Loh, 2003), we propose that religious individuals' well-being and prosocial behavior will thus be affected by selective passages from the Bible that potentially threaten their relationship with God. More specifically, we tested how religious individuals feel and cope when reading Bible quotes implying that God may exclude them, compared to reading Bible quotes implying that God will never leave them.

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## Exclusion and Ostracism

Research on ostracism and exclusion has—to our knowledge—not investigated how people respond to exclusion by God. Instead, prior research primarily assessed how people react to separation cues in contexts that involve other human beings. Assessing how people would respond to separation cues from a spiritual entity would thus advance not only research on religion but also research on exclusion and ostracism. Demonstrating that people would react to cues that threaten their relationship with God would extend prior theory on ostracism and exclusion to a more abstract level. It would show that people are affected by separation cues from identities that need not be present in the physical sense of the word and as such underscore the power of belonging.

How would Bible passages threatening one's relationship with God affect well-being? When we consider prior research on ostracism, the answer is that exclusion is painful and decreases well-being (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003; MacDonald & Leary, 2005). For example, several studies have shown that individuals who are ostracized from a game of ball toss report lower levels of belonging, control, self-esteem, and meaningful existence, regardless of disposition (Zadro, Boland, & Richardson, 2006), financial incentives (van Beest & Williams, 2006), or social categorization of other players (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007; Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000; Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2004). It could thus be anticipated that people's temporary well-being will drop when they are exposed to exclusionary Bible passages. Although it might be anticipated that individuals respond negatively regardless of the strength of their faith, we thought not. People respond negatively to ostracism in a ball-tossing game, regardless of mitigating circumstances, that is occurring in the here and now. Responses to God's exclusion involve future thinking. This manipulation is more akin to the future alone paradigm (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001) that informs people that they will end up alone in life. This research typically shows that individual differences moderate the effect of exclusion (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007). Hence, we anticipated that our manipulation of inclusion or exclusion by God would be more relevant for those who believe in God than those who do not believe in God.

How would Bible passages threatening one's relationship with God affect prosocial behavior? Prior research on ostracism and exclusion offers several answers. Although there are studies that show that people cope with relational threats in ways that promote acceptance (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000; Maner et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2000; Williams & Sommer, 1997), other studies have shown that people may cope by becoming less prosocial (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007; van Beest & Williams, 2006) and sometimes even hostile (Ayduk, Gyurak, & Luerssen, 2008; Chow, Tiedens, & Govan, 2008; Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003; Twenge et al., 2001; Warburton, Williams, & Cairns, 2006). For example, Twenge and colleagues (2007) informed participants that they would end up alone in life and

observed such exclusion lowered prosocial behavior on several different measures.

Perceived control over reinclusion may explain this difference in coping (Williams, 2009). If targets of exclusion perceive that they have control over reinclusion they are likely to act in prosocial ways to maximize being liked and reincluded. However, when targets of exclusion perceive they have little chance of reinclusion, prosocial acts are fruitless. At this point, motivations to fortify control become dominant resulting in an increased likelihood of antisocial behavior. Given that religious individuals probably perceive that God is more in control over reinclusion than they are, we assumed that exclusion by God heavily thwarts control. We thus hypothesize that exclusion by God will decrease prosocial behavior compared to being included by God.

## Religious Involvement

It may be not enough to just ask whether people do or do not believe in God. Instead, following Batson et al. (1993), we propose that one's faith-based motivation is crucial. To measure religious involvement we used the Religious Life Inventory (RLI) developed by Batson et al. (1993; further refined by Hills, Francis, & Robbins, 2005; Ziebertz, Schloder, Kalbheim, & Feeser-Lichterfeld, 2001). The RLI builds on the work of Allport (1950; Allport & Ross, 1967) who argued that people's faith may be intrinsically, extrinsically, or quest motivated. Intrinsic involvement refers to a genuine, heartfelt devout faith (e.g., "Quite often I have been keenly aware of the presence of God or the Divine Being"). Extrinsic involvement refers to a more utilitarian use of religion as a means to an end (e.g., church attendance to gain social status). Quest involvement refers to treatment of religion as an open-ended search, emphasizing constant questioning and doubt as a means of spiritual growth (e.g., "I was not very interested in religion until I began to ask questions about the meaning of life").

Of these types of involvement, it has been argued that those with high intrinsic involvement are the most dogmatic (Batson et al., 1993; Hills et al., 2005; Ziebertz et al., 2001). These individuals believe that religion and their relation with God is the most important aspect of their lives. Consequently, we hypothesize that the impact of God's exclusion should be especially relevant for individuals who are intrinsically involved in their religion.

## Study 1

In Study 1 we focus on self-reports of fundamental needs as a proxy of well-being. Participants were given quotes from the Bible that referred to inclusion or to exclusion or quotes that did not refer to inclusionary status. We predicted (a) that participants would have lower need satisfaction in the exclusion condition compared to both the inclusion and the control conditions and (b) that satisfaction is associated with intrinsic religious motivation and less with extrinsic or quest motivation.

## Method

**Participants and design.** We approached, paid €5 to, and randomly assigned 110 individuals (61 females) at Christian student organizations of Leiden University (age  $M = 20.76$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ) to an exclusion, inclusion, or control condition.

**Procedure.** We seated participants behind a desk in separate cubicles and told them they were participating in a study assessing people's understanding of various aspects of their religion. After some demographic questions, they filled out the RLI (Extrinsic scale  $\alpha = .74$ , Intrinsic scale  $\alpha = .95$ , Quest scale  $\alpha = .81$ ).

**Independent variable.** In the exclusion condition they were given two quotes that emphasized God's exclusionary orientation ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" Mark 15:34; "Then Saul became afraid, because he noticed the LORD had abandoned him," Samuel 18:12). In the inclusion condition the quotes emphasized God's inclusionary orientation ("Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you," Deuteronomy 31:6; "Neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Romans 8:39). In the control condition, we used quotes unrelated to inclusion or exclusion ("In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters," Genesis 1:1-2; "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in their entire vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work," Genesis 2:1-2). The quotes were followed by a few sentences explaining how these quotes provide religious proof that participants would thus also experience the fact that God would at some point in their lives abandon them (exclusion condition), that God would always be with them (inclusion condition), or that God created the earth (control condition). To complete the manipulation participants were instructed to write down their thoughts about what they had read.

Next, participants filled out a 12-item need satisfaction index, adapted from van Beest and Williams (2006), which assessed the extent to which belonging (e.g., "During the assignment I felt alone"), control (e.g., "During the assignment I felt in control"), self-esteem (e.g., "During the assignment I felt insecure"), and meaningful existence (e.g., "During the assignment I felt that my presence was meaningful") were satisfied ( $\alpha = .80$ ). They also answered a manipulation check.

## Results

**Manipulation check.** More than 90% of participants correctly indicated whether the passage was inclusionary or exclusionary. The results were no different when removing those who indicated the wrong answer, so we included all participants in our analyses.

**Need satisfaction index.** Using a hierarchical regression analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003), we coded the

experimental factor into two orthogonal contrasts and centered the scores on the intrinsic religion scale. We first contrasted the exclusion condition against the inclusion and control conditions (contrast 1 weights: 1,  $-.5$ ,  $-.5$ ), and then the inclusion condition with the control condition (contrast 2 weights: 0,  $-1$ , 1). The first contrast informs us about the specific effect of the exclusion condition, and the second contrast checks whether the inclusion condition differs from the control condition.<sup>1</sup>

Entering the main effects of condition and intrinsic religion in Step 1 had a significant effect on the need satisfaction index,  $F(3, 106) = 5.98$ ,  $p < .001$ . As predicted, needs were more negatively thwarted in the exclusion condition ( $M = 4.61$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) than in the inclusion ( $M = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) and control conditions ( $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ),  $\beta = -.37$ ,  $t(104) = -4.18$ ,  $p < .001$ . Need threat ratings did not differ significantly between the inclusion and control conditions,  $\beta = .06$ ,  $t(104) = 0.67$ ,  $p = .50$ . This shows that ostracism is negative rather than inclusion being particularly positive.

Adding the interaction between condition and intrinsic religious motivation in Step 2 was significant,  $F(2, 104) = 3.02$ ,  $p = .05$ . Intrinsic religiousness interacted with the contrast comparing exclusion with the other two condition,  $\beta = -.18$ ,  $t(104) = -2.02$ ,  $p < .05$ , and did not interact with the contrast comparing inclusion and the control condition,  $\beta = .12$ ,  $t(104) = 1.42$ ,  $p = .16$ . This supports our prediction of higher sensitivity to God's exclusion by those intrinsically motivated by religion (see Figure 1).

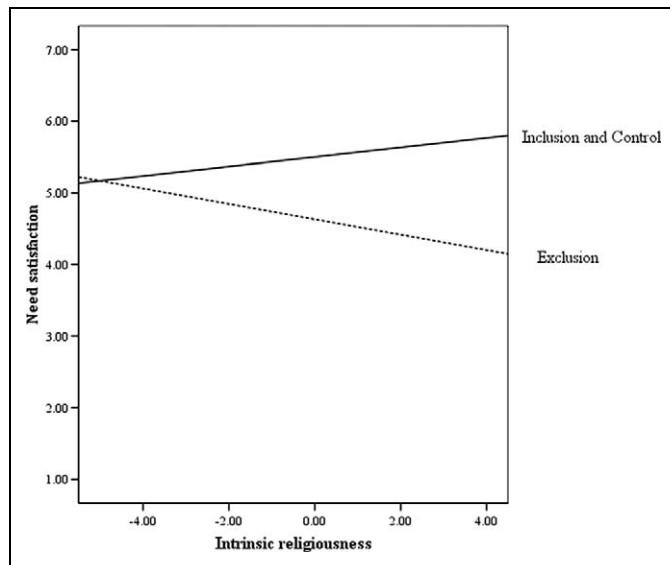
We also checked whether extrinsic and quest religiousness moderated God's exclusion or inclusion, but this was not the case,  $F(2, 104) = 1.13$ ,  $p = .32$ ,  $F(2, 104) = 0.01$ ,  $p = .98$ , respectively. This supports our hypothesis that our exclusion manipulation speaks especially to those who are intrinsically motivated by their faith.

## Discussion

Consistent with previous research on ostracism in which people respond negatively when excluded by peers, Study 1 showed that exposure to Bible passages of God's exclusion also threatens fundamental needs. In the case of God's exclusion, well-being drops especially for those with high intrinsic religious motives. In addition, our control condition showed that the action was driven by the exclusion and not by the inclusion condition.

## Study 2

In Study 2 we test our hypothesis that God's exclusion lessens prosocial behavior. We predicted that intrinsically religious people would give less money to charity when exposed to God's exclusion than God's inclusion. Moreover, because reductions in prosocial behavior after exclusion have been theoretically linked to a loss in control (Warburton et al., 2006), we expected that our findings on prosocial behavior would be mediated by control and not by other fundamental needs or mood.



**Figure 1.** Regression lines of satisfaction ratings by condition and intrinsic religiosity in Study 1

We measured prosocial behavior with actual donations to real charities. For three reasons, we gave our participants the opportunity to donate to either a student fund or a church fund: First, it increases the ecological validity of the dependent variable because in the real world people usually choose among multiple charities. Second, providing participants with two different charities maximizes our chances to detect prosocial behavior. Finally, it allowed us to explore whether the decrease in prosocial behavior is domain specific or more general. That is, it allowed us to test whether the size of a donation is accompanied by a shift in fund preference such that rejected religious individuals are more likely to select the student fund whereas included religious individuals are more likely to select the church fund. However, based on prior research showing that rejection affects prosocial behavior for charities that are both close to (e.g., Twenge et al., 2007) or distant from the source of ostracism (e.g., van Beest & Williams, 2006), we expected a general, not domain-specific effect. We thus expected that the exclusion manipulation would affect only the size of the donations and not the type of fund that is selected.

## Method

**Participants and design.** At several Christian student organizations of Leiden University, we approached and paid €5 to 84 individuals (64 women; age  $M = 21.83$ ,  $SD = 7.99$ ) and randomly assigned them to an exclusion or inclusion condition.

**Procedure.** As in Study 1, religious involvement was assessed with the RLI (Intrinsic scale  $\alpha = .95$ , Extrinsic scale  $\alpha = .65$ , Quest scale  $\alpha = .64$ ) and well-being was assessed with the 12-item need satisfaction index ( $\alpha = .92$ ). Because we hypothesized that donation behaviors would be mediated by control (and not by other needs), we analyzed each need separately

(control  $\alpha = .85$ , belonging  $\alpha = .85$ , self-esteem  $\alpha = .85$ , meaningful existence  $\alpha = .71$ ).

There were some changes in the procedure. First, we used one Bible quote (Mark 15:34 vs. Deuteronomy 31:6). Second, we assessed negative emotions (fear, fright, worry, guilt, irritation, and regret) that have been linked to religious involvement ( $\alpha = .81$ ; Duriez & Hutsebaut, 2001). Third, we changed the wording of the questions in both the need and mood indexes. In Study 1, we asked participants to report how they felt “during the assignment.” Instead, participants were asked to report how they felt “at this moment.” Fourth, instead of a recall measure as a manipulation check, participants were asked to indicate whether the Bible quotes induced a sense of exclusion (i.e., “The quote indicated that I would be abandoned”; 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*).

Finally, we included a measure of prosocial behavior. We informed the participants that the experimenters were approached by two charity funds that needed help. The first fund (Agape) was a Christian charity fund that aims to spread the word of God. The second fund (Leiden University Fund; LUF) helps students to study abroad. Participants were told to use an envelope that was already present in their individual cubicle and asked to write down on the envelope whether they intended to support Agape or LUF. It was made clear that they had to put the envelope in a drop box that was situated near the exit of the laboratory regardless of whether they made a donation. In correspondence with the APA guidelines, we gave all the donations to Agape and LUF when the experiment was completed.

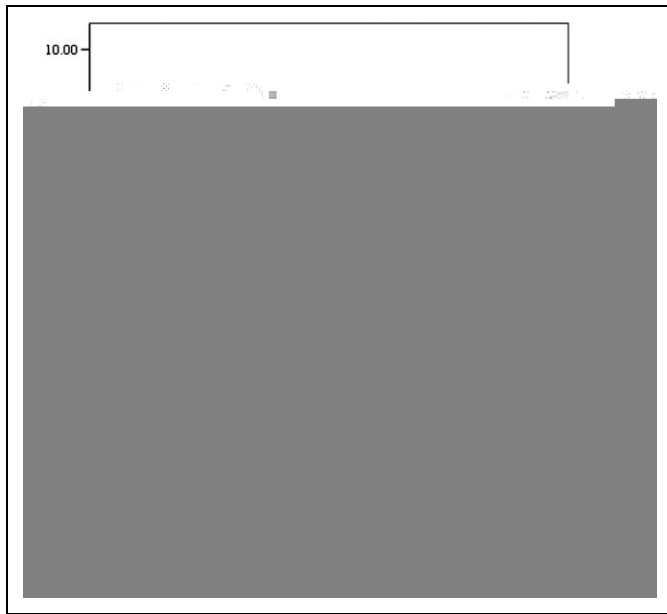
## Results

Below we present analyses in which we related our experimental condition to how people are intrinsically motivated by religion. Again, we also assessed how extrinsic and quest religion affected well-being and donations. The only finding was that extrinsic motivation had a marginally significant main effect on increased contributions,  $\beta = .19$ ,  $t(81) = 1.19$ ,  $p = .06$ .

**Manipulation.** The manipulation of condition was successful. Participants felt more excluded by God in the excluded by God condition ( $M = 6.20$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) than in the included by God condition ( $M = 2.28$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ),  $\beta = -.82$ ,  $t(81) = -12.86$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Actual donations.** We predicted that participants would be less prosocial in the God-exclusion condition than in the God-inclusion condition and that this would be moderated by strength of intrinsic religious motives. This prediction was supported (see Figure 2).

Entering the main effects of condition and intrinsic religion in Step 1 had a significant effect on donations,  $F(2, 81) = 12.39$ ,  $p < .001$ . The main effect of condition indicated that participants donated fewer euros in the exclusion condition ( $M = 1.40$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) than in the inclusions condition ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 2.98$ ),  $\beta = .32$ ,  $t(81) = 3.28$ ,  $p < .001$ . The main effect of intrinsic religiosity was also significant, indicating that participants who scored higher donated more than those who scored lower on this scale,  $\beta = .39$ ,  $t(81) = 4.07$ ,  $p < .001$ . Adding the interaction between condition and intrinsic religious motivation in Step 2



**Figure 2.** Regression lines of money given to charity by condition and intrinsic religiousness in Study 2

also had a significant effect on donations,  $F(1, 80) = 4.95, p < .05$ . As predicted, the excluded individuals gave less to charity than the included individuals, especially those who scored higher in intrinsic religiousness,  $\beta = .21, t(80) = 2.23, p < .05$ .

**Fund selection.** To assess whether prosocial behavior is domain specific or general, we conducted a log linear analysis with condition, intrinsic religiousness, and fund selection. This analysis yielded an effect of fund selection,  $\chi^2(1) = 15.93, p < .001$ , that was qualified by an interaction with intrinsic involvement, indicating that participants who scored high on intrinsic religiousness made relatively more donations to the church fund (41 vs. 1) than did participants who scored low on intrinsic religiousness (19 vs. 23),  $\chi^2(1) = 32.48, p < .001$ . More importantly, these effects were *not* qualified by an interaction with condition,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.79, ns$ . This shows that our experimental condition is not associated with a shift in fund preference and thus that prosocial behavior is general. In fact, when we consider the overall contributions, we observe that both the student fund and the church fund obtained more money in the inclusion (total = €100.10; church fund = €94.10, student fund = €7.10) than the exclusion condition (total = €61.50; church fund = €57.00, student fund = €4.50).

**Needs and mood.** An additional aim was to understand why religious individuals reduce the amount of their donations when excluded. We therefore assessed how each specific need was affected by condition and religious involvement. Separate hierarchical regressions on control, meaningful existence, belonging, and self-esteem revealed that not all needs were equally affected by our manipulations. As can be seen in Table 1, overall satisfaction was driven more by control, belonging, and meaningful existence than by self-esteem.

**Mediation.** We reasoned that our proposed relation between the prospect of being abandoned by God and faith on donations

**Table 1.** Beta Weights of Condition, Intrinsic Religiousness, and the Interaction Term for Needs and Negative Mood in Study 2

	Condition	Intrinsic religiousness	Interaction
Need satisfaction	.11	-.32**	.24**
Control	.21**	-.03	.23**
Meaningful existence	.04	-.43**	.22*
Belonging	.19*	-.23**	.23**
Self-esteem	.01	-.07	.12
Negative mood	.21**	.07	.22

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ .

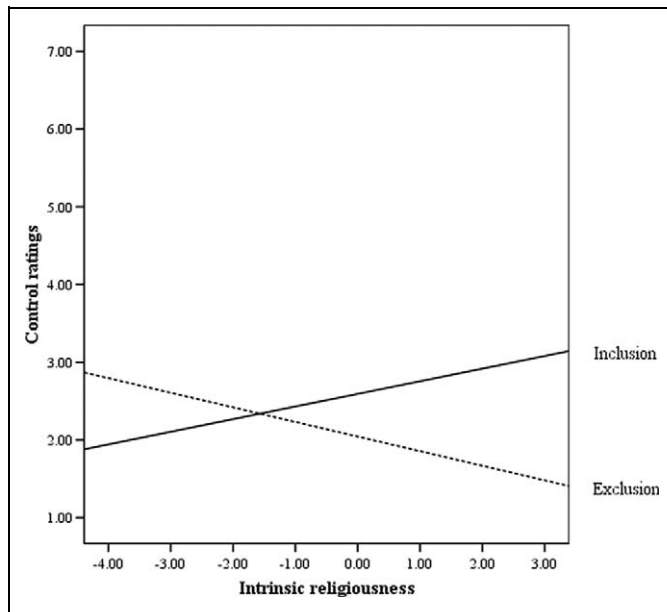
to charity would be mediated by a loss of control. To test this mediation model we needed to establish (a) that the interaction of the independent variables affected donations, (b) that the interaction of the independent variables affected control, and (c) that the interaction of the independent variables on donation became nonsignificant after controlling for experienced control (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005). All three conditions were satisfied.

The first regression described above established that both our independent variables affected the dependent variable. The second regression that we conducted was to establish how both our independent variables affected control (see also Figure 3). This regression showed that exclusion lowered a sense of control,  $\beta = .24, t(86) = 1.9, p = .05$ , and that participants were particularly affected by exclusion when they scored high on intrinsic religiousness,  $\beta = .22, t(86) = 2.12, p < .05$ . The third regression showed that the interaction between the independent variables disappeared,  $\beta = .14, t(80) = 1.54, p = .13$ , after controlling for the participant’s experienced control,  $\beta = .26, t(80) = 2.71, p < .01$ . A Sobel test indicated that this reduction was statistically significant, ( $Z = 1.68, p < .05$ , one-tailed).

Other regressions assessing potential alternative mediators revealed that belonging,  $\beta = .12, t(80) = 1.25, p = .22$ , self-esteem,  $\beta = .07, t(80) < 1$ , and meaningful existence,  $\beta = .06, t(80) < 1$ , did not affect actual donations. Moreover, the effect of negative mood on actual donation was only marginally significant,  $\beta = .17, t(80) = 1.76, p = .08$ , and did not sufficiently lower the interaction effect of condition and intrinsic religiousness on actual donations,  $\beta = .14, t(80) = 1.8, p = .08$ , Sobel  $Z = 1.38, p = .09$ . In sum, control was the only variable that mediated the effect of condition and intrinsic religiousness on actual donations.

**Discussion**

Study 2 replicated and extended the findings of Study 1. We again observed that intrinsic religious individuals are negatively affected when informed that God will abandon them. Extending this finding, we showed that such religious individuals lower their donations to charitable causes when their relationship with God is threatened and that this behavior is mediated by a loss of perceived control. Moreover, our analysis of fund preference suggests that these findings are not domain



**Figure 3.** Regression lines of control ratings by condition and intrinsic religiosity in Study 2

specific. Although religious individuals donate less to charity when ostracized than when included, they are not less likely to select a church fund than a student fund. In fact, considering the overall contribution, we observed that people gave less money to both the church and the student fund in the ostracism condition than the inclusion condition. Although these data should be considered with due care, after all there were relatively few people who selected the student fund, they do suggest that both charities profited most when participants considered that God includes them.

## General Discussion

We tested how the prospect of being included or excluded by God affected individuals' fundamental needs, mood, and prosocial behavior. We argued and observed that such a threat to one's relation with God is particularly pronounced for individuals with strong intrinsic religious motives. We provide evidence that such individuals experience a decrease in well-being when reminded that God could exclude and that they donate less to charity. This provides evidence for our proposition that part of the variance in previous research on prosocial behavior may be attributed to the particular aspects of one's faith that become activated prior to this behavior.

Corroborating previous research we showed that it is not sufficient to just ask whether people believe in God or not. Indeed, all our participants stated that they believe in God. Instead, one should distinguish among different types of religious involvement (Batson et al., 1993; Hills et al., 2005; Ziebertz et al., 2001). We observed moderation of our exclusion effect only when we considered intrinsic religion and not when we considered extrinsic or quest religion. This is consistent

with the notion that intrinsic religiousness refers to a more dogmatic approach to religion and a genuine heart-felt faith, whereas both extrinsic and quest religiousness refer to more flexible approaches to religion (Batson et al., 1993).

We also advance research that God may serve as an attachment figure in Western societies (Birgegard & Granqvist, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Sim & Loh, 2003). Birgegard and Granqvist (2004), for example, reasoned that (a) separation cues and (b) prior attachment history with parents should increase proximity seeking to God. Participants were sublimely primed with the separation cues (e.g., "Mother is gone") or a control cue (e.g., "People are walking"). Results showed that such separation cues increased self-reports of proximity seeking to God only when participants had a secure attachment history with their own parents. We extend this research by using quotes from the Bible that refer to inclusion or exclusion, by considering how people are involved in their religion, and by adding behavioral responses that tap into prosocial tendencies.

Another contribution of this research is that we are the first to advance theory by integrating measures and methods from two dominant research paradigms in ostracism and exclusion. We used self-report measures of well-being that are based on ostracism research (van Beest & Williams, 2006) but employed a method of exclusion similar to the future alone paradigm (Twenge et al., 2001). Although past research shows the power of being ostracized or excluded by other people (concurrently or in the future), our manipulation involved the less tangible outcome of God's inclination to exclude or include. The fact that our manipulation was enough to create strong effects on several different measures of well-being and actual donation behavior speaks to the power of being excluded.

Moreover, we also explored the underlying mechanism that may account for a drop in prosocial behavior. Consistent with Williams's temporal model of ostracism, we are the first to demonstrate that such a drop is associated with a loss of control but not with a loss in other needs or mood (Williams, 2009). We acknowledge, however, that we cannot be sure about the direction of the effect here because we did not have a control condition in Study 2. One could thus argue that an increase in control led to an increase in donations. Put differently, one could argue that this effect is driven not by exclusion but instead by inclusion. Nevertheless, the overall conclusion remains that participants in the exclusion condition donated less than people in the inclusion condition. Although we would not presume to advocate that church leaders avoid God's exclusionary tendencies in their sermons, this suggests that they may find that their coffers are fuller if they stick to the inclusionary passages.

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## Note

1. In Study 1 and 2 we reran all analyses with a mediation split on intrinsic religiousness. This allowed us to compare participants who scored high or low on intrinsic religiousness in either the inclusion or exclusion condition (and control condition in Study 1). Intrinsic religiousness affected experience and behavior only in the exclusion condition.

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